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GUIDELINES

FOR THE COORDINATION AND DISTRIBUTION
OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR BLIND CHILDREN

NEW YORK, N. Y.

1961



American Foundation for the Blind

15 West 16th Street, New York, N.Y.

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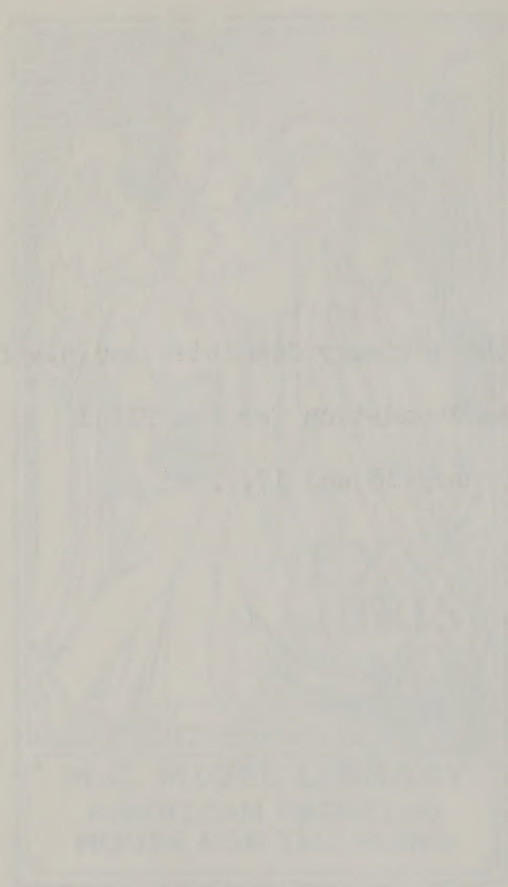
Proposed by the Advisory Committee and Staff

American Foundation for the Blind

February 16 and 17, 1961

American Foundation for the Blind
15 West 16th Street, New York 11, N. Y.

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INTRODUCTION

The complex problems associated with the preparation and distribution of educational materials for blind children has received increasing attention in the United States. Since 1959, the American Printing House for the Blind and the American Foundation for the Blind have jointly sponsored two major conferences in an effort to develop effective solutions to the many perplexing problems which currently exist.

Growing out of the deliberations at the second conference, held in Louisville during November, 1960, general agreement was reached that a need exists to provide leadership in dealing with one aspect of the problem, namely, the task of developing a plan for achieving maximum use of available educational materials. (Other efforts are continuing on many fronts to effect other solutions to the basic problem by the development of improved technology, central reporting procedures, enlarged federal appropriation of funds, etc.)

Accordingly, the American Foundation for the Blind established an Advisory Committee which met in New York City on February 16 and 17, 1961.

In issuing the call for this meeting, Mr. M. Robert Barnett, Executive Director, instructed the Advisory Committee members to "prepare a set of suggested principles and procedures which, when studied by interested state-level personnel..... would be helpful in achieving the maximum use of every book for a maximum number of children within that state".

The statements which follow represent the effort to develop a series of guiding principles upon which a specific plan can be built. As will be seen, this plan evolves upon the establishment in each state of a continuing unit which in turn will serve as the basis for a national coordinating unit.

Finally, the conferees turned their attention to the task of implementation. It was recognized that it will be necessary to modify the proposed plan on a state-by-state basis in relation to the local circumstances. It was also recognized that it will be necessary to take steps beyond the mere dissemination of information if an effective national system is to be developed. In this connection, the American Foundation for the Blind offered assistance through its field staff of program specialists and regional representatives. The normal process of community organization can be utilized in an effort to mobilize resources and personnel on a state-by-state basis to the fullest extent feasible.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

I. There is need for the establishment of a national system which will provide for effective intra- and inter-state coordination of textbook distribution.

II. To be effective, this system must be based upon the principle of centralization on both the national and state levels.

III. On the national level, centralization should be related appropriately to the functional areas of responsibility of the existing national agencies.

IV. It is essential that there be close cooperation and coordination with all national publishers of educational materials for the blind.

V. There should be established in each state a coordinating unit charged with the responsibility for developing and maintaining a system designed to maximize the use of available text and library materials.

VI. In view of the fact that primary responsibility for the education of children in the U.S. is vested with government, the proposed state level coordinating unit should likewise be lodged within a governmental agency or its designee.

VII. In light of the variation in patterns of administration of educational programs on the state level the proposed coordinating unit should be established within the administrative structure of one of the following agencies: State Department of Education, State supported residential school, or the specialized state agency for the blind.

VIII. It is essential that the proposed state coordinating unit be established on an official and permanent basis with adequate provision for financing its total operating costs; including staff, physical plant, equipment, supplies, etc.

IX. To insure continuous statewide cooperation and in addition to the normal methods for securing such cooperation it is recommended that there be officially established an advisory committee to the state coordinating unit and that this committee be comprised of official representatives of every organization, both governmental and private, within the state having a substantial concern with the area of production and distribution of books and whose involvement is essential to the success of the proposed plan.

SUGGESTED FUNCTIONS OF PROPOSED STATE COORDINATING UNIT

In a review of successful programs responsible for the distribution, production and procurement of text materials; it appears that a coordinating unit is feasible and applicable to the variety of state programs offering educational services to blind children. Specific blueprints for action will depend upon the needs and resources within a state or region.

To maintain an effective liaison with national agencies, one reporting hub within a state is most desirable although a very close cooperation between two reporting agencies may extend satisfactory services. The following guidelines, based on the development of a unit within a state responsible for the procurement and storage of text materials and equipment required by blind children, could lead to more efficient distribution of materials and better educational services.

1. Whenever a state program of distribution is initiated, although the plan may be rather small in scope in its beginning, it should be flexible enough to eventually meet all developing needs; such as, the re-distribution of supplementary texts or equipment that may be required to provide adequate educational services.
2. Although a single depository of materials may not be necessary, a central card inventory is of paramount importance. The unit should establish a card inventory which can include materials and equipment for each medium. For braille texts the cards should include the title of the text, authors, copyright date, ink print publisher, braille publisher or transcriber, location and condition of material. The catalogue should indicate at all times the availability of the texts, i.e. "for loan", "how long", "for sale", etc. This whole procedure should relate to recordings and large type materials, as well as braille.
3. Even though the unit does not have storage available, the unit should assume responsibility for the adequate storage of materials which may require the cooperation of several agencies.
4. To maintain a current inventory in all media implies that the unit should assume responsibility for the re-distribution of materials. To keep materials available for maximum use, the unit should develop adequate inspection of materials and assume responsibility for maintenance and repair of equipment; vis., playbacks and braille writers. Replacements can be ordered when materials or equipment should be withdrawn from circulation. The unit should assume responsibility for the judicious retirement of materials.
5. To expedite distribution of materials the unit should develop simple shipping procedures.
6. The unit should concern itself with long range planning, and should establish a working file of both current and anticipated needs in the state. Quite often production requirements demand the early spring assignment of work to transcribers to meet September deadlines. To maintain a current working file, the unit should be a clearing house of materials assigned to transcribers as well as texts produced within the state. To prevent duplication of materials available in other states, the unit will require an early determination of textbook needs to allow for the time lag which develops during the nationwide search for textbooks and copyright clearances.

7. To secure text materials from other states, a unit should be willing to loan materials that are not in use.

8. Where materials are prepared within the state, the unit should establish a current register of transcribers (both braille and recording) that includes specialties (foreign language, math, etc.) and an indication of the quality of the production of each transcriber.

9. The unit should assume responsibility for the establishment and application of acceptable standards of quality in the production of braille, recordings, and large type materials.

10. To eliminate duplication of effort, the unit should assume responsibility for the clearance of copyrights; preferably through liaison with established national agencies such as the Library of Congress, American Printing House or the Recording for the Blind, Inc. as national clearing services develop.

11. Through a working advisory committee the unit should take the leadership to establish job descriptions for personnel working directly with the production and re-distribution of materials.

Those states who make materials of suitable quality available for loan will gain in the exchange of materials when resources from all regions are identified.

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION

Administrators are fully aware of the magnitude of the task of developing an effective national system for maximizing the use of available educational materials for blind children. To achieve this goal, a considerable expenditure of time, effort and money will be required. At the same time, administrators are equally cognizant of the imperative need for such an expenditure if progress is to be made in reducing the existing frustration faced daily by teachers, students, volunteer braillists and local administrators of educational programs.

In considering the problems of implementation of the proposed plan, the committee concluded that additional steps will be needed beyond the mere publication and dissemination of its report-- if substantial progress is to be realized. Accordingly, the national organizations represented pledged full support through the provision of consultation services to assist any state or region to implement the establishment of the proposed coordinating unit.

Initially, an effort will need to be made to bring together all appropriate persons in a given state for the purpose of establishing a planning committee which will provide the necessary leadership for developing and implementing the state plan. To be effective, this committee should be composed of persons with high level administrative responsibility. It is anticipated that this planning committee will form the nucleus for the recommended Advisory Committee to the proposed state coordinating unit.

Following a study of local conditions and needs, the planning committee will need to develop a specific design for the proposed state coordinating unit with respect to administrative auspice, structure, function, staffing, equipment, physical plant and financing. It will then be necessary to determine the administrative and legal action required for implementation. Following the formal acceptance of the proposed plan, it will be desirable for the proposed advisory committee to assist the newly created state coordinating unit in establishing its operational program especially in regard to the development of appropriate policies and procedures. Once the program is operative, regular meetings of the Advisory Committee will be necessary to insure maximum cooperation throughout the state of all agencies, institutions and groups.

It is anticipated that this process can develop concurrently in several states and that a considerable amount of time will be needed before all states will reach its final goal. However, the development of a complete national catalogue listing of all available educational materials is directly dependent upon the degree to which the states implement the proposed plan.

Because of its long standing interest in the field of education for blind children the American Foundation for the Blind will make its staff available for the purpose of promoting the development of state-level programs in cooperation with other national as well as state organizations in the interest of achieving the maximum use of all text and library materials.

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